Amendments to the Claims:

The following is a complete set of claims pending in this patent application, replacing all prior versions:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A catalyst bed for decomposition of monopropellant fuel using a transition ~~transitional~~ metal catalyst over which the fuel is made to flow, the bed comprising:

a plurality of thin metal plates in a stacked contiguous relation,. each such plate having a surface of catalytic material and a plurality of flow-through holes of selected size and location for flow of said fuel axially through said stacked plates, said flow-through holes being axially offset from plate to plate to promote lateral flow of said fuel between adjacent plates, at least a portion of each such plate on a downstream side being etched to direct said ~~permit~~ lateral flow in all directions ~~of said fuel~~ between ~~said plates~~ flow-through holes of adjacent plates.

Claim 2 (original): The catalyst bed recited in claim 1 wherein said plurality of plates comprises a plurality of groups of said plates, each said group being separated by a metering plate having flow-through holes that provide reduced open area compared to the flow-through holes of said adjacent groups of said plates.

Claim 3 (original): The catalyst bed recited in claim 2 wherein each said metering plate which is positioned more downstream of an upstream metering plate comprises larger flow-through holes than said upstream metering plate.

Claim 4 (canceled)

Claim 5 (original): The catalyst bed recited in claim 1 wherein said etched downstream side of each said plate comprises unetched portions forming support columns for supporting each said plate on an adjacent said plate.

Claim 6 (original): The catalyst bed recited in claim 1 wherein said metal plates are substantially circular.

Claim 7 (original): The catalyst bed recited in claim 1 wherein said metal plates are bonded to one another to form a monolithic stack.

Claim 8 (currently amended): A catalytic ~~catalyst~~ converter for promoting the decomposition of a liquid fuel into a gas, the converter comprising:

a plurality of thin metal plates having a surface formed of a catalyst material and stacked axially along a flow path of said fuel form upstream to downstream; each said plate having a plurality of flow-through holes leading from its upstream surface to its downstream surface, said flow-through holes being axially offset from plate to plate to promote lateral flow of said fuel between adjacent plates, the downstream surface of each said plate being at least partially removed to promote said lateral flow ~~of said fuel between each pair of adjacent plates~~ in all directions between flow-through holes of adjacent plates.

Claim 9 (currently amended): The catalytic ~~catalyst~~ converter recited in claim 8 [[1]] wherein said plurality of plates comprises a plurality of groups of said plates, each said group being separated from adjacent said groups by a metering plate having flow-through holes that provide reduced open area as compared to the flow-through holes of said adjacent groups of said plates.

Claim 10 (currently amended): The catalytic ~~catalyst~~ converter recited in claim 9 wherein each said metering plate which is positioned more downstream of an upstream metering plate [[,]] comprises larger flow-through holes than said upstream metering plate.

Claim 11 (canceled)

Claim 12 (currently amended): The catalytic ~~catalyst~~ converter recited in claim 8 wherein said etched downstream side of each said plate comprises unetched portions forming support columns for supporting each said plate on an adjacent said plate.

Claim 13 (currently amended): The catalytic ~~catalyst~~ converter recited in claim 8 wherein said metal plates are substantially circular.

Claim 14 (currently amended): The catalytic ~~catalyst~~ converter recited in claim 8 wherein said metal plates are bonded to one another to form a monolithic stack.

Claim 15 (currently amended): A catalyst bed comprising:

a generally cylindrical array of catalyst material the axis of which is substantially parallel to the direction of flow of a fluid through said bed, the catalyst material being configured as the surface material of a plurality of stacked, contiguous, thin metal plates having axial flow-through holes of selected size and location to promote uniform flow and contact of said fluid with said catalyst material, said flow-through holes being axially offset from plate to plate to promote lateral flow of said fuel between adjacent plates, at least a portion of each said thin metal plate on a downstream side is removed to provide a gap between adjacent plates to promote said lateral flow in all directions between flow-through holes of adjacent plates.

Claim 16 (canceled)

Claim 17 (original): The catalyst bed recited in claim 15 wherein said plates are segregated into a plurality of groups of said plates and wherein each said group is separated from an adjacent group by a metering plate having flow-through holes the total area of which is less than the total area of the flow-through holes in said plates of said groups.

Claim 18 (original): The catalyst bed recited in claim 17 wherein each said metering plate which is positioned more downstream of an upstream metering plate comprises larger flow-through holes than said upstream metering plate.

Claim 19 (canceled)

Claim 20 (previously presented): The catalyst bed recited in claim 15 wherein said removed portion of each said plate comprises unremoved portions forming support columns for supporting each said plate on an adjacent said plate.

Claim 21 (original): The catalyst bed recited in claim 15 wherein each said plate is characterized by an open area ratio which is defined as the combined area of the flow-through holes divided by the total area of the plate and wherein the open area ratio of said plates generally increases along said direction of flow.